

June 2025

Dear Parents/Carers,

## **Important Changes to Mobile Phone and Smartwatch Policy - September 2025**

### **Introduction**

The use of mobile phones in schools represents a significant national challenge, alongside mental health, and child safety concerns. As these issues affect all schools, we have undertaken a thorough review of our mobile phone policy to ensure it aligns with our Alive Model, which is at the heart of our educational approach.

Our priority is to create an environment where students can develop skills, knowledge, and Alive attributes so that they can make their unique contribution to the world. We believe every student has hope and destiny, and our policies aim to support this vision, underpinned by a commitment to Safe Boundaries, Good Relationships and Empowered Learning.

This letter outlines our position for 2025-26, which will be reviewed throughout the year.

### **Our Research Process**

Over the past year, we have carefully evaluated our approach to students' mobile phone use during school hours, and investigating options, including phone pouches and lockers. Our research has been guided by four key priorities:

1. Our unique context – As a city centre school drawing students from every postcode in the city and beyond.
2. Understanding teenage habits – Recognising that our students are digital natives with lifelong technology access.
3. Addressing teenage pressures – Acknowledging that mental health challenges and peer issues often stem from digital connections and FOMO ('fear of missing out').
4. Balancing expectations – Considering the diverse perspectives held by parents/carers, staff, and students.

### **Our Values**

The fibre of our school is based around our Alive Model of learning, including our 15 Alive values. The position we will take centres strongly around Diversity and Choice, Trust and Truth, alongside Justice and Respect. Our new policy takes into account the diversity of our student population and our context, the importance of making good choices everyday through respecting 'Safe Boundaries'; acknowledging the importance of justice and fairness by keeping to the rules and maintaining 'Good Relationships'; by being trusted and truthful in words and actions to develop good character and enabling young people to make their unique contribution to the world.

### **Department for Education (DfE) Guidelines**

The DfE now requires schools to "develop a mobile phone policy that prohibits the use of mobile phones and other smart technology with similar functionality (for example the ability to send and/or receive notifications or messages via mobile phone networks or the ability to record audio and/or video) throughout the school day, including during lessons, the time between lessons, breaktimes, and lunchtime."

The DfE outlines four implementation options:

- Option A: No mobile phones on school premises.
- Option B: Mobile phones handed in on arrival.
- Option C: Mobile phones kept in secure locations and not accessed during school day.
- Option D: "Never used, seen or heard" policy with strong deterrents.

At SMRT, we recognize that Option A is impractical due to safety needs (being contactable on the way to and from school) and digital transactions for transportation (purchasing bus tickets etc.). We have extensively investigated Option B, but our school layout and movement logistics make this difficult without significant expenditure and deployment of staff resources. Option D has proved less effective than we would have hoped and expected despite our best attempts. This is partly due to deterrents not being sufficiently robust.

Therefore, our position from September 2025-26 will combine elements of Options C and D.

### **Our New Policy from September 2025**

#### **Key Policy Points**

- Students should store mobile phones in their school lockers for the day.
- Mobile phones are not needed during school hours and should remain out of reach and sight.
- Students who choose not to use lockers or forget to use their lockers must ensure that phones are never "used, seen, or heard" (i.e. turned off and in bags).
- The never "used, seen, or heard" definition includes visible phone outlines in pockets or bags.
- Consequences for non-compliance.

To ensure this policy is effective, we are implementing clear consequences that are consistently applied:

- Confiscation for up to 5 school days.
- Phones will only be returned to parents/carers or other priority contact in our school system. Phones will not be returned to students or siblings.
- If phones are not collected by a parent/carer/priority contact within 5 days, they will be handed back to the student at the end of the fifth school day.
- While confiscated phones will be held securely, the school accepts no liability for these items; however, they will be stored in a secure place until collection.
- Phones will not be held over a holiday period.

#### **Important information for Parents/Carers:**

- Parents/carers should establish a "Plan B" for students who rely on phones for travel to and from school, for example for bus tickets or bus payments, in case of confiscation. This is very important as school staff cannot be responsible for students after the end of the school day. We encourage families to prepare alternative travel arrangements in case of confiscation.
- Parents/carers should ensure their child has a school bag.
- Please note that Visitor Reception is open between 8am and 4pm (3.30pm on Fridays). Phones will not be returned outside of these hours.
- Please do not expect to contact your child through the school day, as phones should not be "used, seen or heard". Any communication needs to be through the school reception and/or Year teams.
- We recognise parents' and carers' concerns about students being unable to travel home if their phones are confiscated. We are sympathetic to this but need to be clear that our responsibility is safeguarding students while they are in school. Parents/Carers are responsible for student safety after school hours. Therefore, please ensure that you talk to your child about the importance of not breaching the rules in order to support the school and your child.

- Confiscation of items can be emotive. It is important to stress that rudeness, verbal abuse or any other form of unnecessary behaviour by parents/carers (or students) towards members of staff will never be tolerated.
- Where a student needs to use a mobile phone for medical purposes, e.g. electronic monitoring of diabetes, adjustments will be put in place through working with key staff and students must respond to the trust they are given by keeping to the agreed boundaries.
- Use of mobile phones when off site, e.g. after school PE fixtures or a field trip, will be decided on a case-by-case basis, e.g. based upon the length of the day or the distance travelled. Expectations will be made clear to students and when students return to the school during the school day, the phone rules will always apply, i.e. students will need to ensure that phones are never 'used, seen or heard'.
- We would recommend that your child wears a watch during the school day to help them manage their time.
- Please check that your child has their locker key when they go to school as they will need it to keep their devices locked away safely. If they have lost their locker key, they can purchase a replacement through student reception (cost £4). It is essential that locker keys are brought to school and kept safe.

### **Implementation Details**

- When arriving at school, students must put their phones away in bags before they pass the school gate. School gates have clear signage instructing students to put phones away. We advise that students who text parents/carers to say they have arrived at school should do this before they pass the school gate. Students must not block entrance to the gate while texting.
- Once at their lockers, students may get their phones out to put them into their lockers. This should be done quickly and sensibly.
- Any phones that are 'used, seen or heard' will be confiscated for up to 5 days. Parents/Carers can collect phones from Visitor Reception (between 8am and 4pm, 3.30pm on Fridays) at any point before the end of the 5th day.
- Once the end-of-day bell rings, phones may be used, seen or heard. Students will not be sanctioned for using their phones, unless the students are in detention or in twilight lessons/interventions.
- Smart watches are treated in the same way as phones and should not be worn in school.
- Headphones (including air pods and similar devices) should not be worn in school. Wearing headphones will lead to a bag search, as it indicates that a phone is connected and being used and is therefore in breach of our rules. If headphones are worn as an accessory, they will be confiscated for a minimum of one day and returned to the student at the end of the next school day. The phone will be confiscated for the duration set out above. Any student who requires headphones or ear loops due to a documented SEND need will have reasonable adjustments in place for their day-to-day needs and Exam Access. They should carry with them evidence of this (e.g. a pass or confirmation signed into their planner) to help support their communication if challenged by a member of staff. If this is an issue for your child that we are not aware of, please contact our SEND team in the first instance.

### **Communication Process**

The school will endeavour to inform parents/carers about phone confiscations via MCAS/text communications, though this cannot be guaranteed and will depend on timing and circumstances.

### **Repeated non-compliance**

Students who have phones confiscated twice will be placed on a phone contract requiring them to:

- Hand in their phone to a designated place at 8:30 am.
- Collect it at the end of the day from the designated place.

The duration of this arrangement will be determined by pastoral leaders and communicated to parents/carers.

## **Non-Compliance Consequences**

We have clearly communicated our policy and will be implementing this approach from September 2025. Students who refuse to hand over a phone and/or are verbally abusive or rude will face significant consequences, potentially including suspension, and will still be required to comply with our confiscation rules.

When a student is told to hand over their phone they must do so immediately, without argument. If a student argues or delays the process, they will lose the right to have their phone back through parental collection and will incur a secondary sanction for non-compliance. It is essential that students are compliant if found breaking the rules.

## **Supporting Your Child**

We understand this is a topic that generates strong opinions. We have listened to parent/carer perspectives throughout the year through individual communications, surveys, and forums. We continue to take a balanced approach and ask for your support in:

- Clearly communicating these rules at home.
- Supporting the policy as a family.
- Helping your child focus on learning while developing a healthy relationship with technology.

We appreciate this approach may cause inconvenience to parents/carers and we apologise for any inconvenience if or when this occurs, but we will hold to our procedure. The best safeguard against inconvenience is for our students to comply with these clear expectations by ensuring their phones are never 'used, seen or heard'. It is vital that any frustration is not projected onto school staff, as inappropriate conduct towards members of staff enforcing this expectation will not be tolerated, nor will the sanction be changed.

Our intention is that through clear communication we can maintain good relationships with students and families whilst 'holding the line' on our expectations and any consequences.

## **Educational Support**

Our school takes an active role in educating students about these issues through our PSHE curriculum, delivered via ViP and the Pastoral Curriculum. Parents/Carers can also guide their children in making good screen time choices.

For additional support and guidance, please visit:

- [Children and technology: Age-appropriate usage advice \(NSPCC\)](#)
- [Let's Talk About Smartphones \(Ten:Ten Resources\)](#)
- [Solutions \(Papaya Parents\)](#)

## **The School's Right to Confiscate**

The DfE's guidance on [Searching, Screening and Confiscation](#) states:

"Schools' general power to discipline enables a member of staff to confiscate, retain or dispose of a pupil's property as a disciplinary penalty, where reasonable to do so. The law protects members of staff from liability in any proceedings brought against them for any loss of, or damage to, any item they have confiscated, provided they acted lawfully."

This is referenced in our [Behaviour and Good Relationships Policy](#).

The DfE's guidance on [Mobile Phones in Schools](#) states:

"Schools can use a range of sanctions for breaching the mobile phone policy appropriate to their context, including confiscation and detentions. Schools have the power to confiscate mobile phones or similar devices as a disciplinary penalty. The law protects staff from liability in any proceedings brought against them for any loss or damage to items they have confiscated as a sanction, providing they have acted lawfully. Staff should consider whether the confiscation is proportionate and consider any special circumstances relevant to the case."

We recognise that many families and students will have strong opinions on this communication and may have views about whether this line is too strict or too lenient. It is our line, with our knowledge of our context, to address the needs of our school.

Thank you for your continued support as we implement these important changes.

Yours sincerely  
On behalf of the Governing Body

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'D. Planter', with a stylized, cursive script.

Del Planter  
Headteacher

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'R. Morgan', with a stylized, cursive script.

Robert Morgan  
Deputy Headteacher